



Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training

2002 Annual Report

April 1, 2003

The Honorable Donald L. Carcieri
Governor
Executive Chamber, State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Governor Carcieri:

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the Annual Report of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training for calendar year 2002. This report describes our activities and highlights our accomplishments over the last year.

During this past year of economic uncertainty, our Department experienced an increased demand for its services by the public. This was especially true for those who found themselves out of work due to the business climate or who were unable to work due to illness or injury on the job. Whether it was through our Unemployment Insurance program, the Temporary Disability Insurance program, the Workers' Compensation program, or workforce services received through our netWORKri system, I am proud to say that our dedicated employees helped more than 130,000 Rhode Islanders through a stressful period in their lives. One of our primary functions continues to be the protection and advancement of Rhode Island's workforce.

Of course, this could not be accomplished without the strong support and involvement of the business community. We've worked hard to strengthen the partnerships between the business community and the state and local workforce systems during this past year. Participation by local business people on the RI Human Resource Investment Council, the local workforce boards, and our many volunteer boards and committees has been essential to the success of the system.






We look forward to working with your administration in our commitment to making Rhode Island a better place to live and work.











Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Marvin D. Perry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marvin" being more prominent and the last name "Perry" following in a similar style.


Marvin D. Perry
Director

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Introduction

This report summarizes the activity of the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) in 2002. The Department's primary function is the protection and advancement of Rhode Island's workforce. DLT prides itself in the building of innovative systems and the competent provision of services. We carefully assess our customer's needs and build custom solutions that surpass expectations while remaining cost effective.

A solid foundation is laid by providing accurate information on Rhode Island's labor market and economy. Programs that: offer temporary income support to unemployed or injured workers (not work-related injuries); provide counseling and/or training for those looking for jobs; or rehabilitation to those injured on the job, are the building blocks for confidence and independence. Standards are maintained with the enforcement of fair labor laws and prevailing wages. DLT ensures that workplace health and safety requirements are met.

The Department constructs close working relationships with an array of other state agencies, nonprofits and private organizations to offer our customers a comprehensive choice of quality programs and services.

DLT helps businesses raise the skill and safety levels of their employees, avoid layoffs and become more competitive. Businesses also benefit from one of the most aggressive employment and training tax credit programs in the nation.

Personalized job search assistance, interview preparation, and training are available at no charge. DLT is ready to help every Rhode Island job seeker, whether the goal is a first job, a better job, or a career change.

There are seven primary subdivisions in this report: the Executive Office, Workforce Development, Workforce Regulation and Safety, Income Support, Workers' Compensation, Administrative Services, and Autonomous Bodies. Each section outlines the services provided and achievements made by the Department in 2002. For more information on any activities detailed in this report, contact the division or unit directly by using the index on page 31.

We appreciate your interest in the Department of Labor and Training and encourage you to visit our Web site at www.dlt.ri.gov. We take pride in the protection and advancement of Rhode Island's workforce.

Executive Office

The Executive Office encompasses the offices of the Director and Deputy Director and the units providing support services for executive functions. These include Legal Counsel, Personnel/Human Resources, and Strategic Planning for the agency. Other activities, which fall directly under the purview of the Director, are the State Workforce Investment Office and the DLT staff that support the Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC).

Legal Counsel

The office of Legal Counsel is responsible for the interpretation of federal and state legislation and its consequent impact on departmental operations. Legal advice on a wide range of issues including leases, contracts, union grievances, and employment law are provided to the Executive staff as needed.

Personnel/Human Resources

The Personnel/Human Resources Unit provides human resource services to the entire Department. These services include the administration of statewide personnel rules and procedures, salary and benefits administration, recruiting, Affirmative Action Plan monitoring, labor relations coordination, and manpower planning reports. The unit also maintains employee seniority lists, coordinates Workers' Compensation claims, and implements all monetary and non-monetary personnel changes.

State Workforce Investment Office

The State Workforce Investment Office (SWIO) continued to coordinate with the Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), administrators and staff of Rhode Island's Workforce Development system to promote the services available through both the netWORKri Centers and, in particular, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Under the leadership of the Human Resource Investment Council, and in coordination with the Greater Rhode Island and Providence/Cranston WIBs, the focus has been on strengthening the partnerships between the business community and the state and local workforce systems. The strong support of the business community in leading and guiding the local WIBs continued to have a positive impact on the system, particularly in the selection of service providers and in coordinating efforts between public and private sector entities. The Boards' commitment to collaboration was evidenced in the effort to expand the recruiting base of three Rhode Island shipbuilding companies. The intent of the project was to satisfy the employers' workforce needs, design a process to use available funds to recruit candidates and subsidize the training costs, and offer unskilled, underemployed individuals access to good paying jobs and careers. With a 100 percent placement rate after training, this project exemplifies the collaborative efforts of a number of public and private sector organizations to satisfy the workforce needs of both employers and job seekers.

The SWIO continued to work with local Boards to attract qualified and interested members to their Youth Councils. At present, these groups are mandated by legislation and are charged with coordinating youth services having an impact on the success of youth in the labor market. SWIO will continue to work with the local WIBs throughout the year in an attempt to strengthen these Councils.

In an attempt to enhance statewide services, SWIO continued its partnership with the Rhode Island National Guard in funding "Operation Forward March." The program was supported by a number of funding streams including WIA, Welfare-to-Work and Human Resource Investment Council dollars. This program is a replica of a similar program that is successfully operated at 22 sites in the State of Florida. The model, utilizing National Guard Armory facilities, is designed around a framework of work-based foundation skills to include: lifelong learning, basic workplace skills, employability skills, and organizational knowledge. This program continues to achieve high placement and retention rates helping to solidify its continued success.

For its Workforce Investment Act efforts, Rhode Island achieved or surpassed the adult and dislocated worker negotiated performance levels as well as the customer satisfaction levels for the year. Achieving these federally mandated targets are significant accomplishments in the State's efforts to deliver quality services.

Workforce Development

The Workforce Development Division offers support to workers in the form of direct job search assistance and labor market information.

Workforce Development Services Unit

The Workforce Development Services Unit (WDSU) oversees all of the activities, program operations, and services that the Department provides in helping workers find employment and helping employers find workers. The unit furnishes administrative and technical support, ensuring that programs are administered according to laws and regulations as well as agency goals and objectives. WDSU oversees the activities of Employment Services, Employer Services, netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers, Workforce Partnership of Greater RI, Trade Adjustment Assistance Programs, Rapid Response and Reemployment Services for Dislocated Workers, Veterans Services, Alien Labor Certification and Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers Program, and the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program.

The Department of Labor and Training delivers its employment and training services via each of the netWORKri Centers throughout the State (see map, page 33, for locations). In addition, a DLT Reemployment Office, located in Middletown at 73 Valley Road, offers several of the services available in the larger Centers. DLT operates a free public employment service providing staff-assisted and self-directed employment and career-related services connecting people to work. Resource areas, designed to provide an extensive library of self-service materials, include computer workstations equipped with Internet capabilities and word processing software. Labor market information is available to job seekers and employers who need information on job trends and wage or

employment data. Employers and job seekers also have access to America's Job Bank (AJB), the largest job bank on the Internet, containing more than 1 million jobs from more than 125,000 employers. Employment counseling and testing services are available to help customers assess interests, skills and abilities, and identify employment goals. Job search workshops are scheduled for those who want to brush up on resumes, review interviewing techniques, learn how to surf the Web, or join a networking group.

DLT is responsible for providing all adult/dislocated worker activities of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in the Greater Rhode Island area. Customers, who are still unable to find employment after using these reemployment resources and are qualified to participate in training or retraining programs, are provided with information on and referral to certified training programs available statewide. Programs include occupational skills training, skills upgrade, job readiness training, on-the-job training, adult education, literacy and remediation. Information on all DLT programs can be accessed through our home page at www.dlt.ri.gov.

Dislocated Worker Unit

The Adult and Dislocated Worker Unit (ADWU) administers a broad range of federally funded programs targeting workers experiencing permanent job loss due to individual layoffs, company downsizing or plant closings. Services are provided to workers under Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and through National Emergency Grants (NEGs) awarded from the US Department of Labor. The unit also coordinates statewide Rapid Response services for companies announcing permanent layoffs. Additionally, the unit has provided assistance in administering adult programs under the Workforce Investment Act.

Last year, Congress amended the Trade Act. Included in the new Trade Reform Act of 2002 is an amendment repealing the North American Free Trade Agreement - Transitional Adjustment Assistance (NAFTA-TAA) program. Because the Trade Reform Act applies primarily to workers certified after November 2002, the Adult and Dislocated Worker Unit is responsible for administering services to workers who have lost their jobs due to foreign competition under both the old and new law. During 2002, workers from ten Rhode Island companies received Trade certification (one group of workers was certified under the new Trade Reform Act); and 251 workers received Trade training services totaling \$939,700.

Rapid Response Assistance, offering on-site information and support to workers facing job loss, provided services to 3,616 workers at 46 Rhode Island businesses and 3 State departments in 2002. These workers benefited from Rapid Response on-site group orientations that included information on Unemployment Insurance, skills assessment, training, and reemployment services available from the netWORKri One-Stop system. For their convenience, workers unable to attend were provided with informational packets.

The unit continued to administer three statewide discretionary grants during 2002. Two grants served dislocated workers from companies in the health care, retail, and business services sector. The third grant served workers from manufacturing firms, such as American Power Conversion, Elizabeth Webbing, Gorham, Hirsch Speidel, Monet, Seville Dye, and Victor Electric. These combined grants have provided over \$1,000,000 in available funding to support reemployment and training services for dislocated workers. Additionally during 2002, the unit received funding of \$425,000 under a demonstration grant to provide remedial education, English as a Second Language and training services to female dislocated workers in the urban areas of Providence, Pawtucket and Woonsocket.

Veteran's Services

Local Veteran's Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program (DVOP) staff serve Rhode Island's veteran population through the provision of comprehensive services to meet the employment needs of eligible veterans. These services include job development, referral to job openings, and supportive services at all six netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers, as well as the Newport County DLT office.

Additionally, outreach efforts serve veterans at the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Regional Office, the DVA Medical Center, the Veterans Community Care Center, and the RI Veterans Home Project for Homeless Veterans.

Staff participated in the annual "Operation Stand Down RI," which provides services to homeless veterans, including access to physical examinations, meals, employment services, and legal assistance. The Veteran's Services staff also participated in Job Fair 2002 and the Transition Assistance Program Seminars, which are sponsored by the US Naval Station, Newport.

Foreign Labor Certification and Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers Programs

Foreign workers have temporary authorization from the US Department of Immigration and Naturalization to live and work in the United States. However, before hiring a foreign worker, an employer must first demonstrate the inability to fill a position with a qualified US citizen at prevailing wages.

DLT is responsible for assisting the employer in meeting all regulations and requirements. Careful monitoring of prevailing wages assures the stability of the US economy and discourages unfair labor practices. In 2002, 544 cases were received.

Employer Service

DLT's eleven Employer Service Representatives (ESRs) serve as the Department's liaisons to the employer community by developing job openings and providing information about DLT services, grant opportunities, and state and federal tax credits.

A primary interest and challenge to the employer community in today's marketplace is to hire job-ready employees. The ESRs are outstationed at our six netWORKri One-Stop Centers across the State, working closely with our partners to develop jobs for our employer customers and to assist in the search for work for One-Stop clientele.

The ESRs collaborate with the Rapid Response Team of the Dislocated Worker Unit (see page 4) to hold recruitment sessions or job fairs for employers looking to hire dislocated workers. The ESRs are also active participants in area Chambers of Commerce and use Chamber networking sessions to keep employers abreast of available services and programs.

The Jobs Network, 1-888-616-JOBS, has been a valuable resource for both job seekers and employers. Employer Service Representatives staff the Jobs Network, which provided expert advice and referrals to over 2,797 customers in 2002—bringing the total number of customers served, since the inception of the toll-free number in August of 1999, to 13,045.

Employment and Training Tax Credits

Rhode Island boasts some of the most aggressive employment and training tax credit programs in the nation. DLT, working in conjunction with the Economic Development Corporation, Regional Employment and Training Boards, the Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC), and the Division of Taxation offers six impressive credit programs.

The RI Jobs Training Tax Credit encourages businesses to upgrade the skills of their existing workforce by offering credits of up to \$5,000 per employee over three years. The RI Adult Education Tax Credit offers up to \$5,000 for employer-funded GED preparation or basic education classes.

The RI Employers' Apprenticeship Tax Credit for Machine Tool/Metal Trade and Plastic Process Technicians issues a credit of up to \$4,800 for new apprentices in these fields. The New Employment Tax Credit offers a onetime credit of \$2,400 for the hiring of someone previously receiving AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).

The Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit encourages employers to hire people from certain "targeted groups." The Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit benefits employers who are willing to hire people previously receiving long-term family assistance through AFDC or TANF. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Welfare-to-Work (WTW) are intended to further the partnership between employment and training systems and the private sector when dealing with problems of the disadvantaged and unemployed. These two tax credits are significant components to the welfare reform effort and can be used as incentives for employers to hire regular or long-term welfare recipients. A new record was set in 2002 as 1,770 certifications were issued to Rhode Island employers.

Labor Market Information

The Labor Market Information (LMI) Unit is responsible for collecting, analyzing and disseminating a wide variety of information on the condition of the Rhode Island economy. What is the latest unemployment rate? Which industries employ the most people? What are the fastest growing industries? What occupations are in demand? How much do various jobs pay? These are just some of the questions that can be answered with labor market information.

LMI operates the federal/state statistical programs in cooperation with the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The information gathered through these programs is the foundation upon which many of our LMI products are based. These programs include: Current Employment Statistics (CES); Covered Employment and Wages (ES 202); Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS); Mass Layoff Statistics (MLS); Occupational Employment Statistics (OES); and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). LMI also extracts data from DLT's administrative records to assemble reports on the diverse activities of the Department.

As a netWORKri partner, one of LMI's primary goals is to provide information to help make the connection between people and jobs. LMI supports two Internet applications that enable customers to access up-to-date information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. One system is designed specifically for job seekers and students, (www.dlt.ri.gov/jobseeker) while the other system (www.dlt.ri.gov/analyzer) provides data for planners, policy makers, economists and economic developers. In addition, LMI provides copies of an Employer Database, developed by a consortium of states under America's Labor Market Information System, to all netWORKri offices for use by staff and customers. LMI personnel provide training in the use of its automated systems to various user groups.

These systems, combined with our redesigned LMI web site at www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi, greatly expand the accessibility of LMI data and analysis. The LMI web site has a fresh new look. Our enhanced Internet presence offers easy access to a wide variety of labor market statistics, including industry trends, wage rates, employment levels, labor force data, occupational projections, and demographics. The web site is continuously updated to provide the latest information available. In addition, there are links to many other sites that may be of interest to the LMI customer. Our goal is to provide universal access to job seekers, employers, planners, policy makers, economists, government officials, and other customers.

Over the last year, the LMI Unit continued to work with the LMI Committee and the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University to implement *LMI Training for Career and Employment Professionals*. This training effort is supported by a \$600,000 grant from the RI Human Resource Investment Council. Over the three-year grant period, it is anticipated that more than 1,000 career and employment professionals will take advantage of this LMI training program. Under the program, individuals receive training in the practical application of labor market information to help them work with customers to find jobs and develop careers. During 2002, more than 30 LMI training sessions and/or presentations were made to diverse groups from throughout the State.

The success of the LMI Training Project was reflected in the receipt of a National Customer Service Award from the US Department of Labor and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies. It was awarded first place in the "Building a World-Class Workforce Award: Professional Development and Capacity Building" category. The Department received a trophy and a \$25,000 award grant. A plaque recognizing the award-winning project and the RI Department of Labor and Training will be permanently displayed at the US Department of Labor in Washington, DC.

The LMI Unit is also home to the Rhode Island Career Resource Network (CRN), funded under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998. Its mission is to support, improve, and make available career-related information to elementary, secondary, and postsecondary school personnel, students, and parents, as well as to government and community agencies that provide career planning and job assistance to their customers.

In 2002, the CRN introduced the *CRN News Corner*, a quarterly newsletter that is distributed to approximately 1,000 educators and others who provide career-related services in schools and other settings. It is available on the CRN web site, www.dlt.ri.gov/crn. In addition, the first two in a series of posters related to career planning were introduced last year. These posters illustrate the value of education and the 16 career clusters identified by the US Department of Education.

The CRN hosted a *Real Game* series "train-the-trainer" workshop in August, which was sponsored by the Northeast Career Resource Network (NECRN) and supported by the

National Training Support Center (NTSC). Twenty-seven persons from five states attended this training, including eight from Rhode Island. The program provided the qualified trainers needed to support four of the *Real Game* series workshops, scheduled to begin in 2003. It also provided the foundation for extended CRN services to elementary schools.

The CRN also hosted the fall meeting of the NECRN, which was attended by representatives of CRNs in seven states and the NTSC. This group provides a vehicle for states to share programs, products, and regional plans. Through the efforts of the CRN, 24 individuals received certification as Global Career Development Facilitators (GCDF) after completing a *Facilitating Career Development* class in the spring. An additional 17 completed the course in August. Approximately half of the trained facilitators work in local schools with the rest representing a wide variety of community or government agencies.

During the year the CRN also provided support to the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the RI School Counselor Association and others to incorporate the concept of comprehensive school counseling and the National Standards of the American School Counselor Association into Rhode Island schools.

For more information on LMI services and products, call (401) 462-8740 or visit our web site at www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi.

netWORKri

The year 2002 brought about progress, learning and change for the netWORKri system. Customers, both job seekers and employers alike, find the Centers professional, friendly, and rich in technology, staff and resources. netWORKri has the capacity to serve a very diverse customer population, from the first-time job seeker to the professional seeking a career change. Job seekers will find everything they need at any one of our six conveniently located Centers. They can create quality, professional resumes and cover letters, access the Job Bank and career web sites, and utilize the resource equipment to copy and fax resumes right to the employer! Computers with Internet access, copy machines, fax machines, telephone banks and resource libraries are available in every Center. Workforce Development experts are readily available to advise, coach and guide customers to reach their full career potential.

netWORKri offers employers everything they need to find qualified applicants. Employer Service Representatives are available in each Center to help employers navigate the Workforce Development System. Our Centers are available for on-site recruitment and business meetings. netWORKri is proud to offer high quality service and products to all customers... at no cost.

In response to customer demand, the Providence and Pawtucket Centers continued with extended hours—each Center remaining open one evening each week. The extension of hours is a convenience to customers who are currently working and seeking to advance or change careers as well parents who find it difficult to access the Centers during traditional hours. Access to the netWORKri Centers during these additional hours presents a great opportunity for employers to reach out to a broader base of customers to fill their job openings.

Connecting to the community was a key focus for netWORKri in 2002. The Centers offered a variety of services and activities providing outreach to employers and community-based organizations. Many of these activities took place during alternative

hours to maximize visibility to non-traditional customers. Centers offered Information Sharing Sessions to employers and community-based organizations to spread the word about netWORKri. Center staff participated in local events such as job fairs and “cultural block parties,” highlighting community services. This will continue to grow and expand into the next year as netWORKri targets faith-based organizations as an untapped customer base.

During the past year, netWORKri partner staff, managers and customers participated in a strategic planning process to set a vision for the next three to five years. Four strategic focus goals were identified as critical to the continuous improvement of netWORKri; marketing, employer outreach, partner participation, and staff development and training. The ultimate goal is to make netWORKri a household name among community and business organizations. The plan was completed in December 2002 and distributed to partner administrators in anticipation of their commitment to achieving the strategies outlined in the report.

netWORKri’s Employer Service Network (ESN) was highlighted in a periodical by the National Center on Workforce and Disability as a collaborative model in Workforce Investment Systems in streamlining employer services. Richard Luecking wrote, “WIA offers new opportunities to broker employer engagement by unifying and streamlining the manner in which employers are recruited for workforce development initiatives. Such streamlining, when it includes well-conceived strategies to serve employers as customers of One-Stop services, could result in more employers willing to participate with One-Stops and ultimately better outcomes for job seekers. One example of this approach was recently implemented in Rhode Island.” ESN is a formal affiliation of local and state workforce and economic development professionals committed to providing seamless services to employers. Four regional ESNs, each associated with a local netWORKri Center, are currently operational throughout the State. Fifty-five community and state organizations have signed on as members, and more than 75 people have gotten jobs because of the leads shared among the members.

New netWORKri brochures, posters and stand-alone collateral were introduced to the system during this past year. The new material, which has received rave reviews, reflects the vision of the Work Incentives Grant to enhance netWORKri for people with disabilities.

The Providence netWORKri Center is “on the move!” A great deal of planning during 2002 will result in a new state-of-the-art facility in Spring 2003. Our new address will be One Reservoir Avenue in Providence. “Build It and They Will Come” was a phrase often heard during the implementation of netWORKri several years ago. It proved to be true, and space was soon in short supply. The new Center will boast large conference room space and many classrooms and training rooms to accommodate the variety of educational, training, and business activities that the Center offers.

netWORKri office locations

Pawtucket	175 Main Street
Providence	220 Elmwood Avenue
Wakefield	4808 Tower Hill Road
Warren	470 Metacom Avenue
West Warwick	1330 Main Street
Woonsocket	219 Pond Street

Office of Staff Development and Training

The Office of Staff Development and Training provides programs and services for all DLT employees to develop their skills and expand their capacity to effectively carry out the Department's mission. The Training Office is very responsive to staff and management training needs as employee focus groups, meetings, and interviews direct program development. Surveys are also conducted on a regular basis to assess the training needs of the netWORKri Centers, and training programs are coordinated based upon staff input.

During 2002, a variety of programs were provided. Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, through a Human Resource Investment Council grant, provided a comprehensive offering of labor market information courses for both Workforce Development Services administrative staff and netWORKri partner staff. These courses assisted netWORKri administrative staff in creating a netWORKri Strategic Plan utilizing local labor market information and Census Bureau data. Additional netWORKri courses offered included O*NET Career Assessment Tools and Sales and Job Development training.

Agency managers participated in a series of management courses through the Office of Training and Development's Management Development Institute. The management courses are offered sequentially, and managers that took the prerequisite offerings are now eligible to participate in advanced Management Development Institute classes. Computer Technology courses offered to agency staff included Creating Reports Using Microsoft Word 2000, Microsoft Excel 2000 Charting, and Microsoft Office 2000 Tool Box.

In addition to training and facilitation services, the Training Office maintains an extensive library of skill-building books, videos, and audiocassettes that are available for loan.

Marketing/Communications

The Marketing/Communications (Mar/Comm) Unit functions much like a small advertising agency offering public relations, and graphic design to the Department. Mar/Comm is responsible for internal and external communications such as news releases, advertising, signage, logo design, and publishing.

Workforce Regulation and Safety

This Division administers laws governing apprenticeships, trade licensing, occupational safety in public facilities, enforcement of child labor laws, wage and hour requirements including federal prevailing wage laws, and numerous programs intended to promote a safe and legal workplace in our State.

Labor Standards

The Division of Labor Standards is charged with enforcing laws that protect workers from exploitation by unscrupulous employers. Protection is promised to: young people who may work under certain conditions, hours and curfew; workers who are entitled to overtime pay and/or Sunday or holiday premium pay; workers who are to be paid at least the legal minimum wage; industrial homework workers as well as numerous others. Wages collected on behalf of workers filing complaints totaled \$62,558.89 in 2002 with \$6,378.37 collected in administrative fees.

Labor Standards has a web site that provides the laws enforced by this Division, frequently asked questions, and a list of the legal holidays. The web site may be accessed at www.dlt.ri.gov/lb

Occupational Safety

Occupational Safety protects the public by enforcing health and safety standards for all State agencies, public buildings, and city and town educational facilities. The Occupational Safety section boasts five separate areas of specialty.

The Boiler Unit inspects boilers and pressure vessels operated in commercial establishments and places of public assembly (such as churches, childcare centers, and hospitals) in order to ensure public safety by preventing explosions or fire hazards. All repair work is closely monitored and must meet national safety standards. The Boiler Unit works in tandem with the insurance industry to eliminate duplicate and delinquent inspections caused by the renewal and cancellation of insurance policies. The Boiler Unit issued 11,586 Certificates of Inspection during 2002.

The Elevator Unit inspects and certifies elevators, escalators, wheelchair lifts, and other lifting devices. This unit also investigates accident reports and complaints of malfunctioning equipment. The Elevator Unit made 4,183 inspections in 2002.

The Right-to-Know Unit requires employers using, storing or transporting hazardous substances to register annually with the Department. The unit makes certain that employees are notified if they use, or may be exposed to, a hazardous substance. Right-to-Know works closely with employers, conducting on-site inspections and assisting them with compliance. The unit registered 7,680 employers in 2002.

Under the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986, Title III provides for Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know. The unit maintains an accurate inventory of hazardous substances and prepares emergency plans in case of accidental contamination. Informative publications and videos are available and SARA staff are often asked to make public presentations. In 2002, approximately 800 facilities submitted TIER II Inventory forms, half of which were filed electronically, helping to reduce the data entry workload.

Finally, the Safety Compliance Unit inspects all public sector facilities to ensure compliance with general safety standards. All school buildings, both public and private, are inspected on an annual basis. This unit is also responsible for ensuring that employers provide the necessary safety equipment and/or protective devices for

their employees. Employers are required to keep accurate records of occupational injuries and illnesses. In 2002, Safety Compliance inspected 1,855 sites.

Professional Regulation

Professional Regulation is responsible for the monitoring and enforcement of diverse statutes. These include testing and licensing a number of technical professions, ensuring compliance with prevailing wage laws, and imposing standardized measures as established by the National Bureau of Standards at the US Department of Commerce.

The Trade Licensing Unit tests and licenses workers in apprenticeable trades. During 2002, 3,200 examinations were administered and 26,364 licenses were issued or renewed in the following trades: 6,970 Electrician; 6,082 Hoisting Engineer; 5,420 Pipefitter, Refrigeration Technician, and Fire Protection Sprinkler Fitter; 1,150 Sheet Metal Worker; 3,124 Telecommunication; 2,139 Plumber; and 1,479 Apprentice. Enforcement of licensing provisions is a major activity, which prompted 9,240 field investigations and 260 hearings held by the various licensing Boards during the year 2002.

A major step toward improving workplace safety in the construction industry was made with the enactment of RIGL §28-20-35. This law requires all “on-site” employees on projects worth \$100,000 or more to complete the OSHA 10-hour safety program. Rules have been promulgated by the Safety Awareness Board, through which compliance will continue to be enforced. In 2002, 62 companies were cited and fines totaling \$9,350 were issued to eight companies. In addition, 16 companies were issued fines, which were suspended for a 12-month period pending any further violations; 36 complaints were dismissed; and 2 complaints were withdrawn.

RI General Law §37-13 requires contractors, who have been awarded contracts for public projects costing \$1,000 or more, to pay prevailing wage rates according to federal standards. In 2002, approximately 100 complaints were filed and 30 companies were found to be in violation. Of those 30 companies, at least 5 of these cases are still pending and wages totaling almost \$250,000 could be collected. Approximately \$2,000 was collected on behalf of unpaid workers, and penalties collected in 2002 totaled \$934.17.

The State Apprenticeship Council regulates and safeguards apprenticeships in the licensed trades. During 2002, the Council registered and approved 531 apprenticeship programs and 1,479 agreements.

The Division of Professional Regulation has a web site, which can be accessed at www.dlt.ri.gov/webdev/profregs/default.htm, giving the general public full access to the laws and rules and regulations governing licensed trades and safety awareness. Public notices, Board meeting dates, examination dates, mandatory education providers, trade license contacts, and a Board member roster are also available.

Mercantile

The Mercantile Unit certifies and oversees the performance of 28 municipal sealers of weights and measures who ensure that weighing and measuring devices used in commerce are accurate. A wide variety of calibration activities are performed on equipment such as taxicab meters, home heating oil delivery truck meters, gasoline measuring devices, and store and platform scales.

Income Support

Income Support is comprised of the units that insure Rhode Island workers against temporary loss of income due to unemployment or inability to work due to a non-work related illness or injury.

Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a federal/state program financed through employer payroll taxes and administered by DLT. The UI program provides temporary income support to workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own. In 2002, approximately 64,000 workers in Rhode Island collected over \$248 million in UI benefits.

The year 2002 was the first for using a new Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system installed in December of 2001. It eliminated some mechanical functions for Call Center personnel buffeted by increasing volume and decreasing staff. The claims-taking portion includes 20 automated questions that the claimant can complete while waiting in queue. This input automatically transfers onto the UI screens when the claimant speaks to a claims interviewer for the completion of filing for benefits. Functions available through the IVR include claims filing (both initial and re-files) for regular and extended benefits, as well as IVR inquiries transferred from the TeleServe payment line. IVR services that require no interviewer intervention include weekly payment certification, payment history inquiry, adjudication decision inquiry, 1099 requests, and general information.

IVR Call Volume

Total Call Center Calls	1,023,382
Tele-Serve (payment line)	799,912
Call Center	163,065
Payment History	17,002
Adjudication Status	27,056
1099 Requests	1,904
General Information	81,617

March 2002 brought the challenge of TEUC (Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation), a federal extended benefits program allowing up to 13 additional weeks of benefits to eligible individuals who had a claim filed on or after March 15, 2001 and had exhausted benefits or whose Benefit Year had expired. The challenge for our Department was to ensure that all potentially eligible individuals would be contacted and receive the additional benefits to which they were now entitled. This required programming to identify potential claimants, notify the individuals, process claims, and make payments. Notices were sent and special work hours were added to manage the backlog of new TEUC claims.

The Call Center, with the assistance of our Adjudication, Overpayment, and Fraud personnel, began handling TEUC telephone claims in March. Approximately 39,000 potentially eligible customers were notified by mail, as well as by announcements via news media and newspaper ads. By April, the Call Center had received 5,127 claims and had processed 3,889 payments. An additional newspaper ad was run and extended hours were provided on the first three days of April to insure that no potentially eligible customers were missed. The staff worked 12-hour days to process the TEUC claims and payments

as quickly as possible. Rhode Island was one of the first states, nationally, to pay TEUC customers. The Call Center took 17,624 TEUC claims by the end of the year.

Unemployment Insurance Activity 2002

Benefits		Change from 2001
Initial Claims	88,303	-11%
First Payments	45,577	-3%
Number of Payments	703,694	+10%
Amount of Payments (net)	\$204,565,541	15%
Average Weekly Benefit Amount	\$290.70	+5%
Average Duration per Claim (weeks)	15.4	+1.8 weeks

Trust Fund (includes TEUC)

Total Income	\$231,487,340	+42%
Total Disbursements	\$255,178,229	+41%
Year-End Fund Balance	\$253,798,866	- 9%

Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation (TEUC)

New Claims	17,624
First Payments	15,720
Number of Payments	152,839
Amount of Payments	\$44,133,741
Average Weekly Benefit Amount	\$288.76
Average Duration per Claim (weeks)	9.7
Final Payments	9,397

Federal Claims

Federal law provides for unemployment compensation for Unemployed Civilian Federal Employees (UCFE) and former Federal Military Personnel (UCX). Individuals filing for benefits are subject to the same entitlement and eligibility provisions as an individual claiming benefits based on State-covered employment and wages.

In 2002, there were 244 UCFE claims filed with a total payment of \$747,888. There were 195 UCX claims filed with a total payment of \$986,510.

Extensive programming changes were completed in December 2002, which allows the Rhode Island UI Call Center to request wage and separation information electronically at the time of claim filing. The Louisiana Claims Control Center (LCCC) is now providing a one-day turnaround for requested information on an individual's wage and separation. The technical changes made to obtain this information were necessary for the accurate and timely determination of a federal claim. It also allows for prompt and timely first payment of all federal claims.

Worksharing

Since the inception of this creative and innovative program in 1991, the State of Rhode Island, through DLT, has served employers and workers during temporary business slowdowns. The benefits of this program continue to make it an attractive alternative to layoffs. Employers keep their trained and skilled workforce while the employee continues to work at the company and receive partial unemployment benefits to make up for lost wages.

In May of 2002 the Workshare Program was automated, making this unit more efficient and effective in the way the program is administered. The Workshare Automation Project modernized the application process, the actual claims filing process, and the payment procedures enabling the interviewers in that unit to more efficiently serve the employer and affected employees.

The Workshare Unit filed 8,370 initial claims and generated 36,575 payments in 2002. It is estimated that 2,602 layoffs were averted at about 170 Rhode Island companies. This is only a small decline from the high activity level we saw in 2001 after September 11.

Central Adjudication

The Central Adjudication Unit (CAU) is responsible for resolving all disputed Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims by telephone. This process eliminates the need for personal office visits by workers and employers and speeds the process of resolving disputed claims. The issues that are disputed include voluntary quits, discharges, work refusals, availability for work, reasonable assurance of work, and work authorization. These decisions are audited for correctness and adherence to the law by the Federal Office of the Department of Labor and, internally, by the Benefits Accuracy Measurement (BAM) Unit.

During the year 2002, CAU processed over 29,226 decisions. Sixty-two percent of the decisions involved separation issues and thirty-eight percent were non-separation issues. Forty-nine percent of the separation issues resulted in a denial of benefits while seventy-eight percent of the non-separation issues resulted in the denial of benefits.

Benefit Charge

The Benefit Charge Unit (BCU) generates charge statements each month for employers whose former employees have collected UI benefits. The total number of charge statements mailed to employers average nearly 4,500 per month. In 2002, the BCU responded to over 3,000 inquiries from employers with questions regarding their statements.

In October 2002 the BCU relocated to the Unemployment Insurance Call Center. This now enables the BCU to work more closely with the Call Center in resolving employer questions. In addition, all employer charge statements are electronically stored and available for immediate review by BCU staff. These changes have helped to ensure a timely review and response to employer inquiries.

Benefits Accuracy Measurement

The Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) program is used to identify and correct errors within the Unemployment Insurance (UI) system for claims in compensable status. BAM is a nationwide US Department of Labor diagnostic tool used by all Employment Security agencies. The BAM report is intended to encourage more efficient administration within the UI system by detecting strengths and weaknesses within the State's UI program and by taking corrective action to prevent controllable errors from reoccurring in future years.

Out of the 480 required BAM cases for the year 2002, 433 were cases completed. The overall percentage of overpayments has increased from 7.2 percent in 2001 to 9.4 percent in 2002. Complete analysis of the 480 cases will determine what corrective measures need to be implemented within the UI program.

The Benefit Accuracy Measurement Unit is also responsible for a quarterly review of non-monetary determinations as to timeliness and quality of the decision rendered. The 2002 Benefit Accuracy Measurement report will, for the first time, include statistics for the Denied Claims Accuracy (DCA) program. The DCA program is broken down into three categories: monetarily ineligible claims, separation issues, and non-separation issues. An analysis of these claims by the BAM Unit will further enable the Department to identify errors in each category and take appropriate corrective action.

Fraud

The Fraud Unit investigates suspicious Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) claim activity. During 2002, the Fraud Unit helped preserve the integrity of these programs by detecting fraud and abuse and promoting an effective recovery policy.

In 2002, the Fraud Unit investigated 371 cases of fraudulent activity in the UI and TDI programs involving \$617,266 in potential overpayments. Forty-four cases were referred to the Rhode Island State Police for criminal prosecution.

Central Overpayment

The Overpayment Unit collects monies from overpaid Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) recipients. The overpayments occur because of misinformation given to the Department by the individual or the employer, errors made by the Department, fraud, and decisions overruled by the Board of Review or the Courts. Employer accounts are subsequently credited as a result of this activity.

Overpayment Activity 2002

Cases Received	4,755
Approximate Benefits Overpaid	\$4,676,817
Approximate Refunds	\$2,554,611
Including \$141,201 in interest paid	

Sections 42-61-7.1 and 44-30.1-1 of the Rhode Island General Laws allow the recovery of overpayments from tax refunds and lottery winnings. During the year 2002, \$331,313.94 from 1,614 individuals was intercepted from Rhode Island personal income tax returns. In addition, \$20,823 was recovered from 10 State Lottery winners with the money refunded to the Unemployment Insurance Account.

Temporary Disability Insurance

The Rhode Island Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) program, enacted in 1942, was the first in the United States. It protects eligible workers against wage loss resulting from a non-work related illness or injury. It is funded exclusively by workers in Rhode Island and administered by DLT. Only four other states: Hawaii, New York, New Jersey and California, as well as the commonwealth of Puerto Rico, have a Temporary Disability Insurance program.

In 2002, approximately 410,000 workers paid taxes and were protected by this important insurance program; 50,245 claims were filed and 479,742 payments totaling \$150,968,709 were made to eligible workers.

Over the last two years, TDI has invested in new computer equipment and enhanced computer systems. During 2002, TDI updated the Division's web site, providing customers easier access to more information, and streamlined customer paperwork; specifically, the TDI application and the employers' verification report. This new technology, along with the changes in paperwork, has resulted in faster processing of claims and related information.

One strategic improvement implemented was an electronic document imaging system. The imaging system significantly reduced the need for physical files. In 2002, the first full year of use, TDI imaged over 425,000 documents. The electronic filing system substantially reduced the amount of time spent on maintaining manual systems. Retrieval of documents has also improved, resulting in faster service to customers.

TDI's continued use of Automated Call Distribution (ACD) for channeling high-volume incoming call traffic allowed TDI customer service representatives to personally answer approximately 95,000 customer calls during 2002. Later in the year, a new Interactive Voice-Response (IVR) telephone system was installed, adding eight times the number of lines into the automated claim status system. It significantly improved customer service with immediate answers to common inquiries, improved customer access to our service staff, and reduced waiting time for callers.

Efforts to improve communications with the medical community continued in 2002 with our Medical Outreach Program. This program has been well received by doctors and other practitioners who are involved with TDI.

Temporary Disability Insurance Activity 2002

Benefits

Total Claims	50,245
Number of Payments	479,742
Amount of Payments (net)	\$150,968,709
Average Weekly Benefit Amount	\$314.69
Average Duration per Claim (weeks)	13.0

Trust Fund

Total Income	\$156,685,940
Total Expenditures	\$159,046,709
Year-End Fund Balance	\$56,416,202

Police and Fire Unit

If a police officer, firefighter, crash rescue person or correctional officer has a disabling injury or dies in the performance of duty, the Police and Fire Unit offers support in the form of a monthly annuity and/or tuition reimbursement at any Rhode Island college or university.

Currently, there are 274 widows, 14 dependents, and 30 students in the police program. Additionally, there are 467 widows, 12 dependents, and 45 students in the fire program. Widows receive \$3,600 per year and each dependent receives \$1,200 per year, until he or she reaches 18 years of age.

Workers' Compensation

The Division of Workers' Compensation monitors procedures and payments made by insurance carriers to employees unable to work because of a job-related injury or illness. This Division also collects and disseminates statistical data, provides rehabilitation services to injured workers, responds to compliance and fraud issues, and conducts educational and procedural seminars to all parties within the Workers' Compensation system.

Claims and Data Collection

Workers' Compensation (WC) is a no-fault system that mandates that all RI employers with one or more employees maintain insurance coverage protecting their employees from loss of earnings and/or medical expenses for any work-related injury or illness. This insurance may be purchased through any licensed insurance agent, broker, or insurance company offering WC insurance. The Claims and Data Collection Unit monitors all claim filings to ensure proper payment by the claim administrators and maintains all records and statistical data. In 2002, 30,977 workers' compensation claims were opened.

The Unit continues its highly successful insurer report card program. Under this program, insurers and self-insured employers are sent a status report detailing the timeliness and accuracy of required filings. The report also ranks them relative to other insurers and self-insured employers. This allows them to recognize their strengths and improve upon their weaknesses in reporting to the Department. The primary focus of the program is to continually monitor and improve the validity of our statistics, which are generated from these required filings.

Each year, WC places over 200,000 documents into a variety of filing and storage repositories. Our electronic imaging system plays a pivotal role in our duty as keeper of

records by substantially reducing the need for physical files and expediting the retrieval of stored information.

In 2002, a separate licensing exam was added for workers' compensation claim adjusters. DLT worked in collaboration with the Department of Business Regulation (DBR) to develop the new exam, which is administered by DBR. DLT provides WC Insurance Adjuster Exam Prep Sessions to assist in the study process.

Self-Insurance

A Self-Insurance Program is offered through DLT for larger companies who meet established criteria. In 2002, the workers' compensation market hardened causing the price of insurance to increase. Therefore, no companies dropped their self-insured status and as of December 2002, there remained 49 certified self-insured employers. The Self-Insurance Unit also provides training and assistance with form filing and procedures.

Administrative Fund

The Workers' Compensation Administrative Fund (WCAF) collects a mandated assessment on premiums within the workers' compensation system and provides limited reimbursement to eligible participants. The WCAF assessment provides appropriations for the Dr. John E. Donley Rehabilitation Center, Education Unit, Workers' Compensation Court, DLT Division of Workers' Compensation, Workers' Compensation Fraud Prevention and Compliance Unit, and the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council.

Rehabilitation Center

The Dr. John E. Donley Rehabilitation Center provides broad-based rehabilitation programs for individuals in the Workers' Compensation system. Comprehensive programs extend well beyond simple physical reconditioning. Services include evaluations, physical therapy, aquatic therapy, site visits to the work place, vocational services, psychological counseling, and case management. There is an emphasis on industrial rehabilitation since over 80 percent of clients have been out of work over three months. For the year 2002, the Donley Center achieved an historic high of 482 total return-to-work (RTW) discharges topping the previous year, despite a slightly lower total admission for the year.

In 2002, 65 percent of the patients served were out of work over six months and 41 percent of that group were out of work more than one year before entering the Donley Center. Donley continued to focus on meeting the challenges inherent in serving the chronic population through the design and implementation of a series of workshops on the themes most prevalent among our patients. These workshops include managing pain, managing anger, coping with stress, and lessening fear of return to work. The group format facilitates supportive contact between injured workers and our staff psychologist in methods of coping with these issues.

Our Vocational Services Department, in collaboration with the Institute of Labor Studies, put in place a Computer Skills Training Program for our vocational clients. Each program consists of four classes per week for three weeks. This provides clients with new skills to

help them re-enter the work place. Also in 2002, the Donley Center was able to provide a Physician Outcome Report to more than 200 referring physicians. Specifically, we were able to share the number of patients they referred, the duration of each patient's injury, and the RTW outcome of each case.

With the cooperation of our staff, referring physicians and our alliance with the University of Rhode Island Physical Therapy Program, the consolidation of our URI Satellite clinic was accomplished in March of 2002.

Education Unit

The Education Unit provides services throughout Rhode Island pertaining to all aspects of workplace health, safety and workers' compensation. These services include: establishing loss prevention programs, safety committee development, on-site employer and employee consultations, safety video lending library, workers' compensation filing procedures, and guidance with the RI Workers' Compensation Act. The Unit also has an Outreach Program to educate Rhode Island high school students on workplace safety and employee rights. These services, funded through an assessment on the workers' compensation policy, are offered at no charge.

During 2002, the Education Unit conducted several programs designed to help employers build upon their safety programs. More than 900 employers attended seminars on Strategies for Ergonomic Success, Occupational Noise Exposure, and Latex Allergy Awareness. The goal of these seminars is to enhance the participant's knowledge and skills so they can work more effectively with their programs and, consequently, reduce the frequency, type, and severity of workplace injuries.

A total of 1,230 employers, employees, and students attended education and workplace health and safety seminars sponsored by the Education Unit. Three specialized workshops were conducted for physician's office staff and five for employers to provide an overview of the RI Workers' Compensation system, including procedures for reporting of injuries and illness, explanation of employee rights, return-to-work options, and form review.

The Education Unit staffs an information line for inquiries on the Workers' Compensation Act. During 2002, the Unit handled 12,975 requests for information or assistance.

The Unit has created a selection of informational brochures and compliance guides to assist employers with Federal and State safety standards. Letters and brochures were sent to more than 30,000 injured workers in 2002, advising them of their rights under Workers' Compensation. The Education Unit also conducted on-site training for 350 representatives throughout the State.

Fraud Prevention and Compliance Unit

The Workers' Compensation Fraud Prevention and Compliance Unit's mission is to detect, prevent, and refer for criminal prosecution any suspected fraudulent activity related to workers' compensation, as well as to ensure employer and insurer compliance with the requirements of the Workers' Compensation Act. In 2002, 1,858 investigative inquiries were received.

The year 2002 marked the first full year of our new 'Business Sweep Program' during which 972 business visits were made. Following these visits, 103 businesses purchased workers' compensation insurance adding a total recovered premium of \$130,067.97 to the Workers' Compensation system.

The Unit forwarded 12 criminal fraud cases to the Department of Attorney General for prosecutorial review. To date, two of these cases were criminally charged resulting in court ordered restitution of \$10,508.13 to insurers/employers and \$583.15 to the Workers' Compensation Administrative Fund.

A total of \$87,514.30 in penalties was ordered against employers for failure to maintain workers' compensation coverage. Insurers who failed to report policy information to the Department were penalized \$13,800, collectively. A total of \$23,270 in penalties was collected against employers for failure to timely file an Employer's First Report of Injury. In 2002, 6,756 independent contractor designation forms were filed with the Department.

The Unit maintains a hotline number to receive complaints: (401) 462-8110.

Administrative Services

Administrative Services are an essential component in the smooth operation of any department. DLT boasts a wide range of units offering highly competent support services. Business Affairs oversees Internal Security, Mail, Property Management, Management Services, and the Stock Room. This Division also includes Information Services and a Tax and Treasury Liaison.

Business Affairs

Business Affairs is responsible for maintaining DLT's extensive state and federal financial management system that includes budgeting, purchasing, and administrative and grant accounting.

Information Services

The Information Services Division has the overall responsibility for the application design, development, and implementation of the Department's automated systems, as well as providing the technology infrastructure that supports these systems. During the last year, several technology-based initiatives increased both the number of services and access options available to the citizens of Rhode Island. These initiatives include the offering of several new Internet-based options, which now allow unemployed workers to use these services from the privacy and convenience of their own homes or from any public access facility.

In addition to the "public focused" activities, the Information Services Division continues to support the more than 450 individuals who rely on the Department's systems and technology to conduct business on a daily basis.

Autonomous Bodies

There are several boards and councils that share a close working relationship with the Department of Labor and Training and are reflected in some of the Department's services, yet are not under the Director's authority. For this reason, these groups are summarized under this title. They include the Board of Review, the Labor Relations Board, the Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island, the Human Resource Investment Council and the Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council.

Board of Review

The Board of Review is an autonomous body created by RI General Law §42-16.1-6 and is currently located at 275 Westminster Street in Providence. Board Referees hear lower level appeals from employees and employers on decisions rendered by the Department of Labor and Training regarding Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI). At the higher level of the appeal process, the Board may review or hold additional hearings on appeals from its Referee's decisions. In addition, the Board hears appeals from employers on UI and TDI tax liability issues. Under the United States Department of Labor guidelines, the Board's primary goal is to provide due process and a fair hearing on these issues for claimants and Rhode Island employers.

The Governor appoints members of the Board. As of December 2002, the Board of Review members were Thomas J. Daniels, Chairman, representing the Public; Nathaniel J. Rendine, representing Labor; and Sarah P. Carter, representing Industry.

Through the Board's web site, www.dlt.ri.gov/bor, Rhode Island is one of the few states with on-line appeals capability. A library of significant court rulings on UI/TDI appeals is available from the site. This allows claimants and employers to review recent court findings on appeals from Board of Review decisions.

Appeals to the Board in 2002 increased 15 percent from the previous year. In accordance with US Department of Labor guidelines, more than 95 percent of lower level (Referee) decisions were issued within 30 days – an excellent rating. The Board continues to research and implement technology changes to insure courteous, prompt and efficient service.

Board of Review Activity 2002

	Lower	Higher
UI Appeals		
Claimant	4,080	559
Employer	652	279
TDI Appeals	157	12
Tax	23	0
Strike (Labor Dispute)	11	0
Cases Withdrawn	224	24

In 2002, 78 cases were appealed to the District Court, with two cases further appealed to the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

Labor Relations Board

The Governor, with Senate consent, appoints the seven members of the Labor Relations Board. The Board makes bargaining unit determinations for public sector employees presently unionized or seeking to be unionized, oversees bargaining unit elections, and investigates and resolves charges of unfair labor practices. The State Labor Relations Act allows municipal employees, police officers, firefighters, schoolteachers, State employees, State Police, and 911 employees the right to organize and bargain collectively, but not to strike.

In 2002, 70 charges of unfair labor practice, 30 unit clarifications (involving 177 positions), and 16 election petitions were filed with the Board. The Board held 22 Formal Hearings on these matters and issued 23 formal written decisions. Twelve Board Meetings were held in 2002, two of which included reviewing and updating their Rules and Regulations. The Board also held one public hearing relative to the amended Rules and Regulations, which became effective November 1, 2002.

Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island

The Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island is the federally mandated Workforce Investment Board (WIB) for 37 of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. As a nonprofit, it is led by a 41 member volunteer Board of Directors empowered to direct and oversee a variety of workforce development activities throughout the region. The Department of Labor and Training, through an agreement with the Board, administers federal and state-funded workforce, education and economic development services and programs on behalf of the WIB.

During the 2001/2002 Program Year, the WIB continued with the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which took effect on July 1, 2000. With a full year of experience with the WIA, the WIB focused on assessing the effectiveness of its reorganized governance and service delivery structures. Agreements with partner agencies in the netWORKri system were finally completed and the WIB committees began to assume their individual oversight roles.

The Youth Council continued to assess and refine its role within the structure of the WIB. With broad authority granted by the Board, the Council focused on policies, services and program delivery strategies affecting youth throughout the region. A major challenge was to communicate the message to service providers that performance achievement is key to the WIA legislation. To that end, the Council hosted "Youth Confabs," convening a variety of youth service providers throughout the State to share information and best practices. These proved very successful and resulted in the formation of a number of partnerships committed to work together to improve services. During Program Year 2001/2002, 275 youth participated in a variety of activities designed to improve their basic skills, obtain a high school diploma or GED, acquire leadership and citizenship skills, improve their knowledge of the workforce and labor market, and obtain jobs in their chosen interest areas.

First time job seekers and dislocated workers seeking occupational skills training accessed the Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) through local netWORKri offices. ITAs allow the ability to choose programs offered by a variety of providers, including postsecondary, technical and trade schools. By June 30, 2002, 517 individuals accessed training through ITAs.

The WIB's Welfare-To-Work effort continued to provide work and training opportunities to those on public assistance. Success in these initiatives is measured in long-term employment and retention. By the end of 2002, 830 individuals took advantage of the program. To date, 58 percent of these participants have obtained employment and half that number are successful retentions. With an extension of the program until June 30, 2003, results are not complete; and the WIB expects increased performance in both categories.

The Workforce Partnership of Greater RI continued its highly successful partnership with the RI Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC). Funded by the HRIC and managed by the WIB, the Employee Investment Grant program provided small Rhode Island companies with up to \$10,000 in grant funds to upgrade the skills of their incumbent workforce in order to succeed in a highly competitive market. In 2002, the WIB contracted with 90 companies that resulted in training approximately 940 incumbent workers.

Additional support funding from the HRIC enabled the WIB to maintain needed flexibility to foster and support a number of economic and workforce development initiatives. These efforts help companies to keep pace with new technology and emerging markets. Working with the HRIC, Chambers of Commerce and other business organizations, staff assisted in the development of training for both new and incumbent workers, initiated customized training programs, collaborated with industry cluster projects, and assisted companies in grant writing for Excellence Through Training Grants.

Human Resource Investment Council

State law established the Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC) in 1992 in order to coordinate the workforce development system of Rhode Island. The HRIC's primary role is to act as a catalyst, initiating inventive programs, funding innovative solutions, and building dynamic networks. The HRIC also advises the Governor on workforce issues.

The HRIC receives primary funding from the Job Development Fund (JDF), a .21 percent assessment of the employer's payroll tax. Reducing the regular unemployment payroll tax liability by the same amount offsets the cost to the taxpayer. Consequently, the JDF is revenue neutral, making available approximately \$7 million annually to finance workforce development initiatives for Rhode Island businesses. Approximately \$4.8 million in dedicated JDF revenues financed workforce development in 2002.

The HRIC has identified four primary categories on which efforts are focused. Through a recent awareness campaign, the categories and program names have been changed to more closely reflect the function and purpose of the following programs: Economic Development Opportunities; New Learning Opportunities; Network Opportunities; and Opportunities for People in Need. What follows is an overview of activity in these four categories during 2002.

For more information on HRIC programs, please log on to the web site www.rihric.com, a resource for valuable employee training programs, tax credits, and affiliated agencies partnered with HRIC.

Economic Development Opportunities

Economic Development grants and programs explore opportunities that can improve a company's ability to compete in today's economy. Employers are enabled to train employees, to make the most of new technology, and to transpose obsolete skills into profitable competence.

Recent examples of HRIC supported Economic Development Opportunities programs follow.

Excellence Through Training Grant

This popular program, formerly known as the Competitiveness Improvement Program, awards matching dollars for training grants. Individual companies can apply for up to \$30,000 for employee training. Workshops to assist companies in writing their grant requests are conducted by HRIC staff and workforce development specialists from the Local Workforce Investment Boards. In 2002, 45 grants were awarded totaling \$1.3 million. Since its inception in July 1993, this program has awarded over \$13 million to more than 750 businesses in Rhode Island.

Employee Investment Grant

Rapid changes in technology and organizational restructuring can easily overwhelm smaller businesses. The Employee Investment Grant Program addresses these needs with personalized training. The program is administered through the Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board and the Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island (see page 23). They encourage companies with less than 100 employees to apply for grants of up to \$10,000 to retrain their workers. In 2002, 213 companies were awarded a total of \$554,417 to train 970 employees through this program.

Industry Cluster Initiative

The Industry Cluster Initiative Program encourages companies in similar industries to work together. The collaborators can then address challenges and pool resources and expertise in order to become, collectively, a stronger and more competitive industrial force. This program allocated \$400,000 in 2002.

The Center for Design & Business

The Center for Design & Business is a joint venture between Bryant College and the Rhode Island School of Design, with support from the HRIC. The goal of the Center is to develop stronger and more profitable businesses by uniting design principles with business skills. This is accomplished through workshops, programs and services that provide business and commercialization skills to designers, artists, inventors, and entrepreneurs, as well as linking design resources to established manufacturers.

Rhode Island Jobs Training Tax Credit

The Rhode Island Jobs Training Tax Credit Act was enacted by the General Assembly in August 1996. The Act provides certain employer tax credits for employee job training. To qualify, an employer must file an application for election with the HRIC evidencing, to the satisfaction of the HRIC, that (a) the employer is a qualified employer, (b) the employees are qualified employees, (c) the training program is qualified, and (d) the training expenses are qualified expenses.

The law provides for a Tax Credit of 50 percent of qualified expenses, limited to a \$5,000 credit per employee over a three-year period. Only \$1,000 of qualified expenses can be wages earned while in training.

Jobs Training Tax Credit Statistics

Calendar Year	Applications Received	Employees Trained	Total Costs
1997	114	11,625	\$7,594,567
1998	98	8,851	\$18,910,906
1999	67	2,241	\$4,950,574
2000	83	3,320	\$3,952,808
2001	101	4,049	\$5,586,199
2002	86	6,305	\$4,324,657
TOTALS	549	36,391	\$45,319,711

Support of Economic Development Corporation Programs

To foster economic health and high skill job growth, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), in partnership with the HRIC, assists businesses in training new employees by reimbursing companies for up to 50 percent of approved training costs. In 2002, \$831,000 was awarded to train 625 new employees at 14 companies.

The EDC's International Trade Office offers export trade missions, export management training grants, market entry programs, and general export assistance to Rhode Island companies who seek long-term international trade opportunities. In 2002, \$100,000 was allocated for this effort.

New Learning Opportunities

New Learning Opportunities programs augment America's traditional learning systems. With a focus on teaching skills that are directly applicable to the world of work, students of all ages participate in internships, apprenticeships, literacy programs, and other educational endeavors.

Recent examples of HRIC-supported new Learning Opportunities programs follow.

School-to-Career

School-to-Career in Rhode Island (STC) continues to develop linkages and collaboration between education reform, workforce development and youth development. Systemic change, high academic achievement, career awareness, and preparation are integral parts of this initiative implemented nationwide via the School-to-Work Transition Act of 1996. The HRIC School-to-Career Subcommittee serves as the governing board for implementing and sustaining the School-to-Career system in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island's Interagency Team continues to collaborate on joint legislation, the Career and Technical Center system, and the formulation of a seamless model of an industry-specific (Information Technology) workforce development system.

School-to-Career continues to build upon its successful relationship with Higher Education partners. We are currently collaborating with a Higher Education partner to ensure systemic change within the teacher preparation and certification process in Rhode Island. STC has identified essential elements that will be incorporated into the pre-service training and in-service certification criteria for all education certification candidates. In 2002, \$128,000 was expended for staff support of this federally funded program.

For more information on the School-to-Career in Rhode Island, call (401) 462-8880.

Rhode Island Skills Commission

Based on the recommendations of approximately 200 representatives from business, education, government and the community, the Rhode Island Skills Commission has been working to strengthen the relationship between the State's economic and educational communities since 1992.

The Skills Commission is a partnership among the Rhode Island Department of Education, the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, the National Education Association/RI, and the HRIC. The Skills Commission's work is funded in part by the HRIC, and the commission works closely with School-to-Career.

The recommendations of the Rhode Island Skills Commission Task Force reflected the belief that high skill levels are necessary for economic growth and prompted the development of a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). The CIM will serve as an assurance to parents, employers and educators that an individual has met a rigorous set of academic and applied learning standards and is competent in a clearly defined set of skills. Nine Rhode Island school districts are participating in the implementation of the CIM, which will act as an endorsement of the high school diploma. Over 2,000 educators, parents and business representatives have participated in development work and training associated with implementation. Three of the participating districts are currently piloting the CIM assessment system and recognized student achievement based on the CIM standards in May and June of 2000.

For more information on the Skills Commission, call (401) 222-7972.

Jobs for Ocean State Graduates

Since 1995, Jobs For Ocean State Graduates (JOSG) has been an important component of Rhode Island's School-to-Career effort by increasing academic achievement, providing career exploration opportunities, and reducing truancy and dropout rates in secondary education student population. JOSG is a comprehensive initiative designed to meet the most urgent needs of our at-risk youth offering personalization of the secondary education system for Rhode Island's disenfranchised and disconnected students. JOSG supports students with comprehensive case management, mentoring, academic enrichment, personal growth strategies, life skills enhancement, and career exploration experiences that provide the links between academics and real work opportunities.

Since its inception, more than 1,600 students across the State have participated. JOSG currently enrolls approximately 375 in-school participants and services 200 graduates with follow-up services. JOSG Coordinators have been placed in 11 high schools to work with 40-50 students per school, engaging students in leadership development training and career focus learning opportunities. Activities and services are designed to ensure that the students remain in school, graduate, and pursue employment and/or further education. Following graduation, JOSG Coordinators assist students with postsecondary and/or employment opportunities while providing follow up support services for an additional year.

JOSG has demonstrated proven success in the preceding years via increased student graduation rates, improved student academic achievement, truancy reduction, efficient transition to postsecondary education training, and the development of career opportunities. In the 2001 fiscal year, JOSG had an 82 percent graduation rate, a full time placement rate of 60 percent, and 19 percent postsecondary rate.

For more information about Jobs for Ocean State Graduates, call (401) 462-8858.

Workforce Literacy Collaborative

Working adults with deficient reading skills may find their success hindered in a high performance work organization. The unemployed that are actively seeking work may also

face barriers due to insufficient literacy skills. In 2001, a Request for Proposals to provide Workplace Literacy programs was issued by the HRIC. Over \$2.1 million dollars was awarded to 15 organizations to fund this two-year effort.

Network Opportunities

Network Opportunities seeks to maximize spending dollars by reducing redundancy and focusing on innovative solutions to today's complex issues. The HRIC focuses on building networks that assemble scattered organizations into cohesive, intelligent systems.

Recent examples of HRIC supported Network Opportunities programs follow.

Support of Regional Workforce Development Boards

The Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island (see page 23) and the Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board act as the local implementation branch for the HRIC's policies by working directly with employers, assisting them with grant applications and acting as a liaison between government and business.

Symbiotic partnering of area businesses and organizations is encouraged with programs run by the Boards. In 2002, the HRIC provided funding of \$600,000 to this network in order to foster team building, critical thinking and competitiveness improvement.

netWORKri Career Centers

The HRIC is charged with coordinating the State's One-Stop Career Center system, called netWORKri (see page 8).

Opportunities for People in Need

Opportunities for People in Need programs address the distinct needs of those at-risk of "falling through the cracks" of traditional support services. The HRIC implements inventive solutions via creative partnerships.

Recent examples of HRIC supported Opportunities for People in Need programs follow.

Making It Work

Making It Work: An Investment in People and Place is a collaboration between the United Way of Rhode Island and the HRIC aimed at helping disadvantaged Rhode Islanders overcome employment barriers and enter the workforce. The goal of this public/private partnership is to demonstrate creative ways to match job training, placement and retention efforts with key social supports such as daycare, transportation, health care, and affordable housing.

Job Corps

The national Job Corps program is designed to assist impoverished and unemployed young people by offering them a wide range of services in a residential setting. Enrollees, between the ages of 16 and 24, volunteer for the program. Services include basic education, General Educational Development (GED), vocational skills training, counseling, leadership training, residential living, health care, and related support services. The HRIC helped secure the \$15 million grant from the US Department of Labor that has made Job Corps in Rhode Island a reality and will continue to support the initiative in years to come.

The Center in Exeter broke ground in September 2001, and expects its first students in December 2003. The Center will have the capacity to house 200 students in a campus

setting and has assembled an enthusiastic and committed array of local businesses to serve on the Center Industry Council. Local merchants include Wal-Mart, the Rhode Island Seafood Council, CVS, Electric Boat General Dynamics, ON Semiconductor, Apple Construction, the Rhode Island Builders Association, and two representatives from Rhode Island Chambers of Commerce, including Karla Driscoll, the Executive Director of the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce and HRIC Council member who is Chair of the Exeter Industry Council.

The Center will offer the following clusters: Culinary Arts, Health Services, Financial Services, Construction, Information Technology, and Manufacturing. The manufacturing component is new to Job Corps, and Exeter will be only the second of the 118 Job Corps Centers to offer it.

Council Members 2002

The Honorable Governor of Rhode Island, Donald Carcieri

HRIC Chairman

Raymond P. Rainville..... Blue Cross/Blue Shield of RI

HRIC Executive Director

Marvin D. Perry..... RI Department of Labor and Training

Council Members

Kip Bergstrom.....	RI Economic Policy Council
Joseph Caffey	Omni Development Corporation
Bob Cooper	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Larry Davidson	Ernst & Young
Karla Driscoll.....	North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce
John Gregory.....	Northern RI Chamber of Commerce
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Jane Hayward	RI Department of Human Services
Jack Warner	Commissioner, Office of Higher Education
William Holmes.....	RI State Apprenticeship Council
Steve Kitchin.....	New England Institute of Technology
Seth Kurn.....	New England Institute of Technology
Paul MacDonald.....	Providence Central Labor Council
Peter McWalters.....	Commissioner, RI Department of Education
Lori Merola.....	Fidelity Investments
Representative Paul Moura	
George Nee	RI AFL-CIO
Marlene Qualls	Markee Popcorn Company
Marcia Reback	RI Federation of Teachers
Senator Dominick J. Ruggerio	
D. Faye Sanders	Citizens Financial Group, Inc.
Michael McMahon.....	Economic Development Corporation
Deborah A. Smith.....	National Conference of Christians and Jews
Marcia Sullivan	Providence Housing Authority

Planning and Program Development

The Planning and Program Development (PPD) Unit coordinates and develops grant activities for the Department, provides essential staff support to the HRIC, provides free grant searches for nonprofit organizations and other governmental agencies, and assists other divisions of the Department with special projects and technical support. In 2002, Planning and Program Development continued to search for opportunities to bring federal grant funds to the State.

Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council

State law, under Section 28-42-37 of the Employment Security Act, established the Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council in 1997. The Council is comprised of eight members. Four of the members are employers/employees and are appointed by the Governor based on vocation, employment or affiliation.

The four statutory members are the Chairs of the House and Senate Committees on Labor; the Executive Director of the Economic Policy Council; and the Director of the Department of Labor and Training. The Council advises DLT's Director in the formation of policies and resolution of problems relating to the administration of Chapters 42-44 of the Employment Security Act, assuring impartiality and neutrality in the resolution of problems.

During the year 2002, the Advisory Council continued to review methods to ensure that the Unemployment Insurance system remained fair to both workers and employers. The Council was briefed on the Department's efforts to upgrade technology and improve service to claimants. Those efforts included enhancements to the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system installed in 2001 and the percentage of individuals filing for Unemployment Insurance using the Internet. The Council also reviewed the financial health of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, monitoring the incidence of unemployment, the financial status of the Fund, the methodologies that determine the taxable wage base for employers, and the appropriateness of benefit payment parameters. We are pleased to report that our collective efforts have continued to yield a fair system of benefits, a healthy Trust Fund, and a reasonable and competitive taxable wage base.

Contact Phone Numbers for the Department of Labor and Training

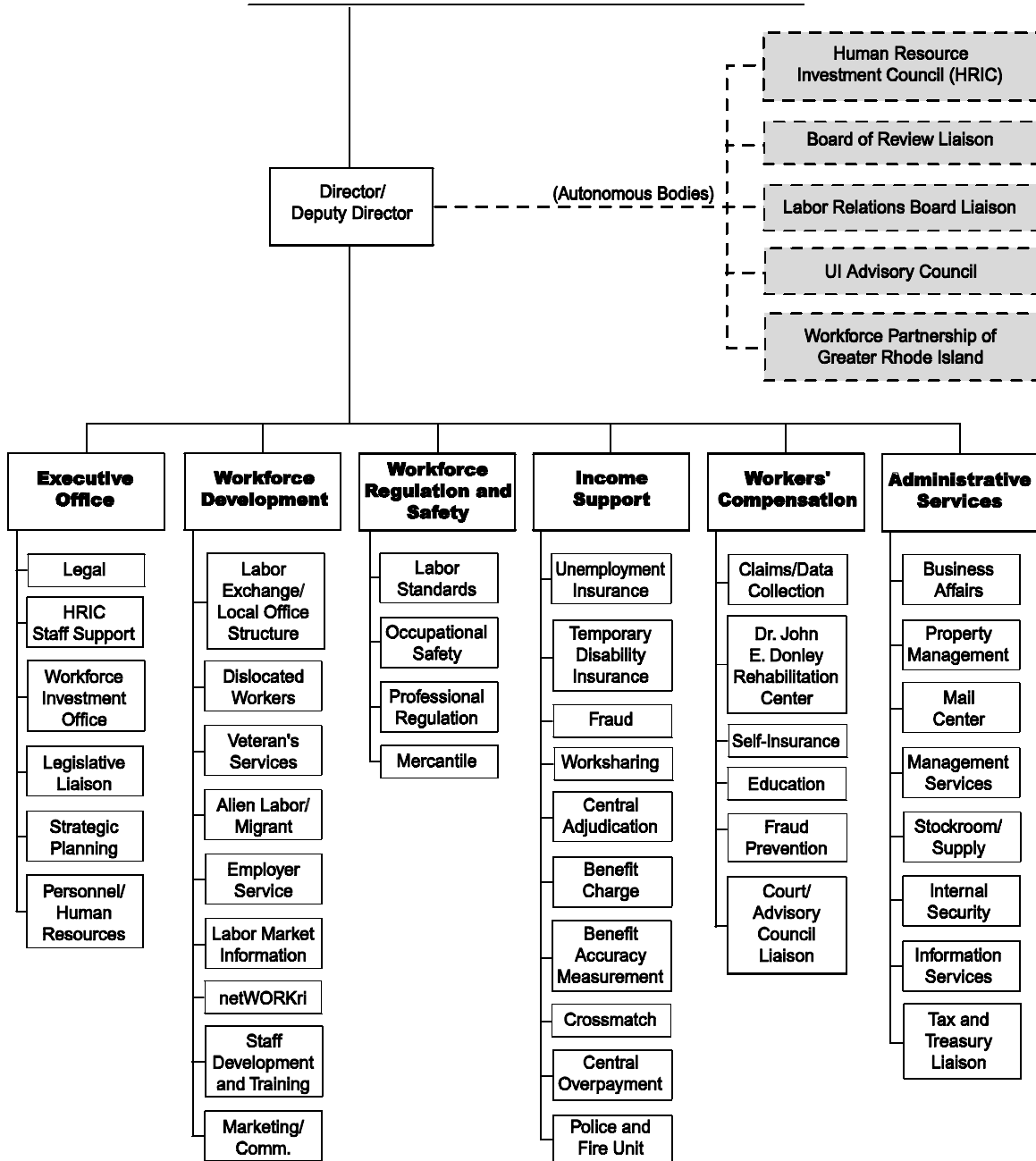
All telephone numbers fall under the 401 area code.

Foreign Labor Certification/Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers	462-8800
Benefit Charge	462-8015
Benefit Accuracy Measurement	462-8610
Board of Review	222-3533
Business Affairs.....	462-8142
Central Adjudication	462-8300
Central Overpayment.....	462-8010
Crossmatch	462-8510
Dislocated Workers.....	462-8811
Dr. J. E. Donley Rehabilitation Center	222-3994
Education Unit	222-3994
Employer Service	462-8710
Executive Office	462-8870
Fraud.....	222-4251
Human Resource Investment Council	462-8860
Information Services	462-8064
Jobs Network.....	462-8800
Labor Market Information.....	462-8740
Labor Relations Board	462-8830
Labor Standards.....	462-8550
Legal Counsel	462-8890
Marketing/Communications.....	462-8810
netWORKri.....	1-888-616-JOBS (5627)
Occupational Safety	462-8580
Personnel.....	462-8840
Planning and Program Development.....	462-8861
Police and Fire Unit.....	782-4497
Professional Regulation	462-8580
School-to-Career	462-8880
Staff Development and Training.....	462-8720
Temporary Disability Insurance.....	462-8420
Unemployment Insurance.....	243-9100
Veteran's Services	462-8800
Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program	462-8800
Workers' Compensation	462-8100
Workforce Development Services.....	462-8800
Workforce Investment Office	462-8780
Workforce Partnership of Greater RI	222-2090
Worksharing	243-9137

Or contact the Department of Labor and Training via the Internet at www.dlt.ri.gov.

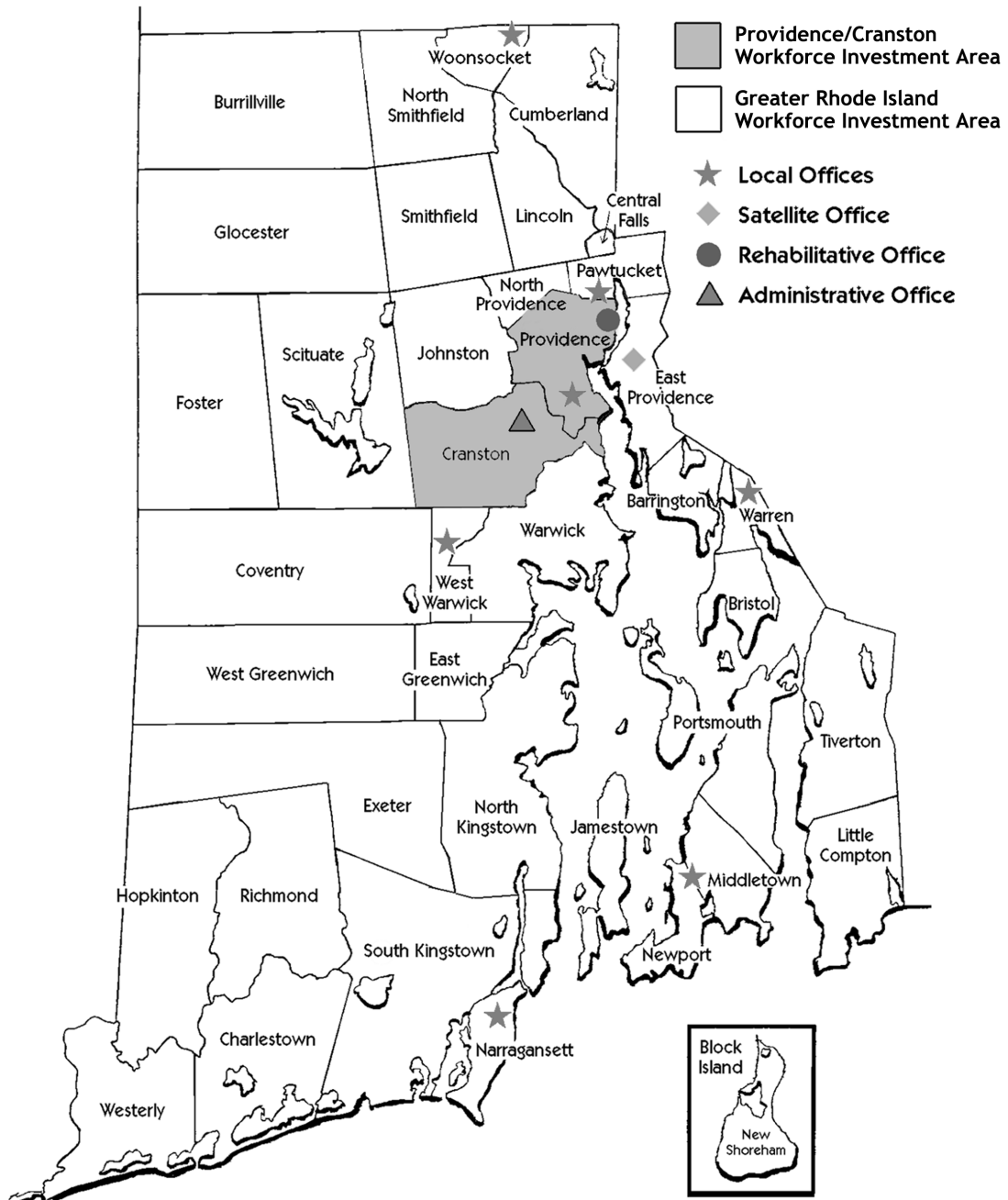
Organizational Chart

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training



Map

KEY



Quick Guides on Grants and Tax Credits

Quick Grant Guide for RI For-Profit Employers

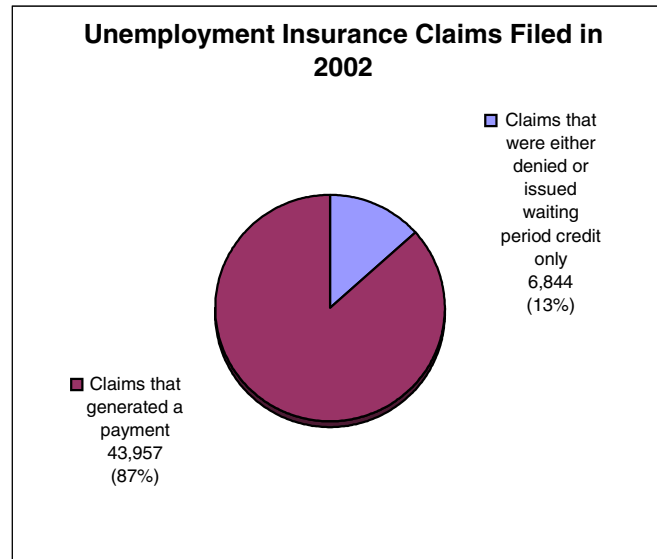
If you need...	then check out	Grant maximum	Contact
company-wide training	Excellence Through Training Grant	\$30,000	HRIC 462-8860
training for several workers	Employee Investment Grant	\$10,000	Workforce Partnership of Greater RI 222-2090 or Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board 861-0800
new worker training	Job Creation Grant	minimum of five new hires	Paul Harden 222-2601
new worker training	On-the-Job Training Grant	Dollar figure unavailable	Workforce Partnership of Greater RI 222-2090
export-related training	Export Assistance Grant	\$5,000	Kathy Tufts 222-2601

Quick Tax Credit Guide for RI For-Profit Employers

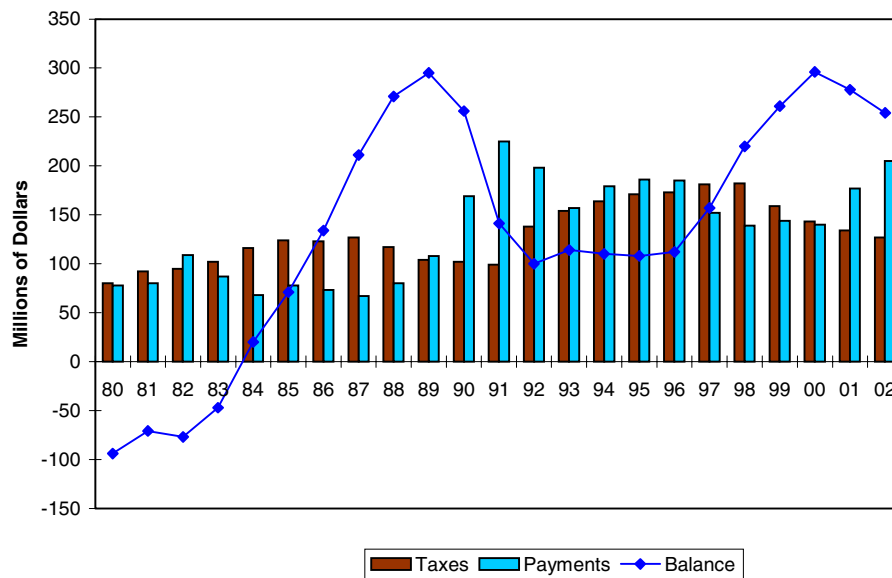
If you...	then check out	Credit maximum	Contact
want to improve worker skills	Jobs Training Tax Credit	\$5,000 per employee over 3 years	HRIC 462-8862
need basic vocational training	Adult Education Tax Credit	\$5,000	ESU 462-8710
hired former AFDC or TANF recipients	New Employment Tax Credit	\$2,400	Bill Brock 462-8405
willing to hire AFDC or TANF recipients	Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit	\$3,500	Joe DesRoches 462-8802
willing to hire from specific job-seeking groups	Work Opportunity Tax Credit	\$2,400	Joe DesRoches 462-8802
pay above average wages or invest significantly in employee training	Ten Percent Investment Tax Credit	credit for up to half of tax liability	HRIC 462-8860 LMI 462-8740

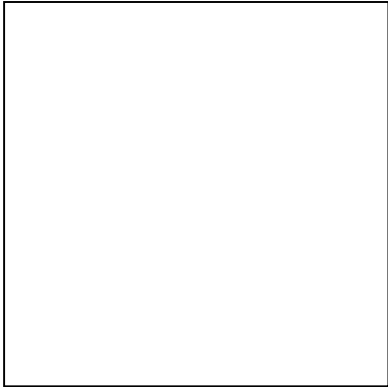
The preceding charts are an abbreviated overview of several grants and tax credits offered through the RI Department of Labor and Training. It is not a complete listing of eligibility requirements, application processes or benefits. For complete information on any grant or tax credit, call the person or group named as the contact for that item. All telephone numbers are within the 401 area code.

Unemployment Insurance Data

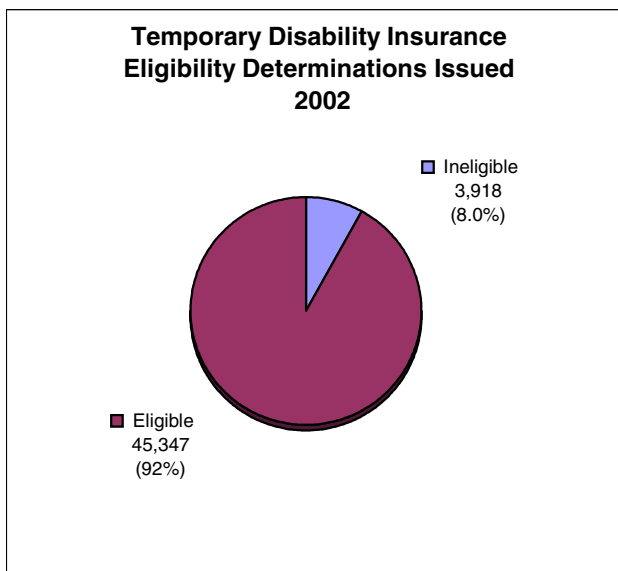


Unemployment Insurance Fund Activity

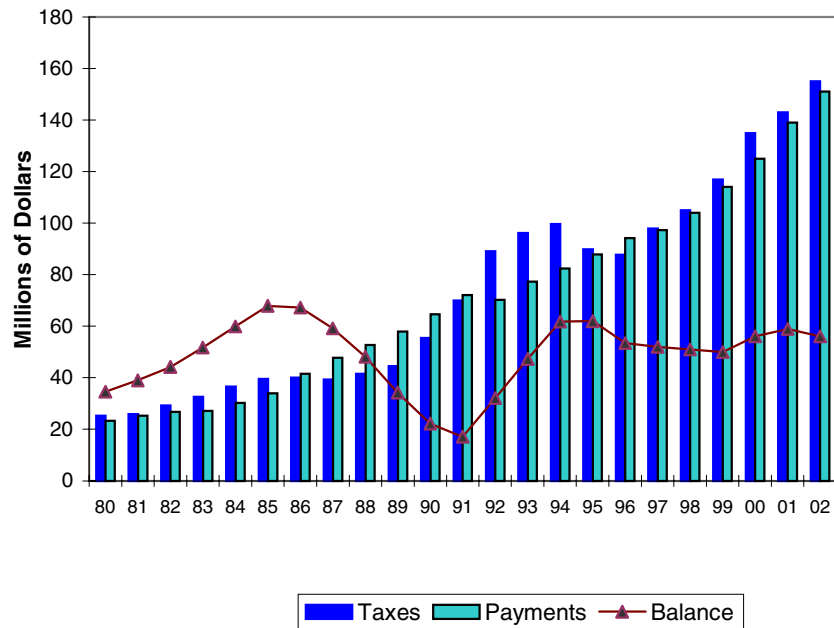




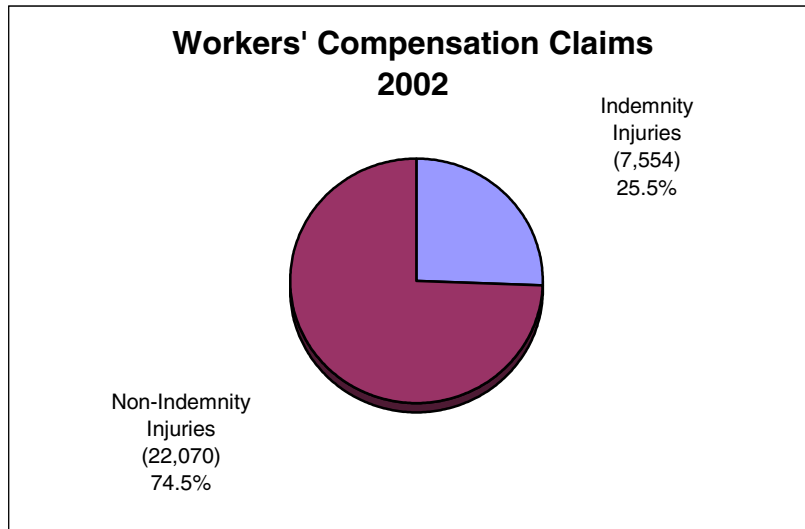
Temporary Disability Insurance Data



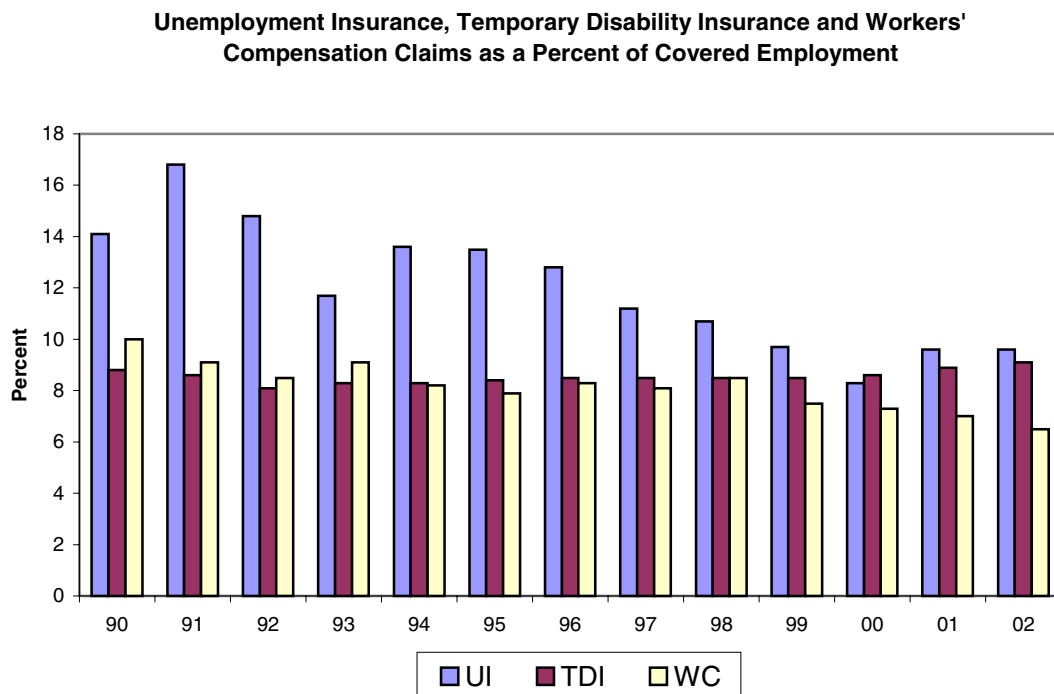
Temporary Disability Insurance Fund Balance



Workers' Compensation Data



Claims as a Percent of Covered Employment



Credits

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